



# TOWN OF PALMER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

## Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 – 6:30 PM  
LOCATION: Town Hall Meeting Room  
4417 Main St Palmer MA

Donald Blais, Chair  
Dorothy Lawrence, Vice Chair  
David Cotter  
Peter Izyk  
Nicholas Zeo  
Brenda Cole  
Lucas McDiarmid  
  
Heidi Mannarino,  
Conservation Agent

**Members Present:** Donald Blais, Jr.  
Dorothy Lawrence  
Peter Izyk  
Dave Cotter  
Nick Zeo

**Members Absent:** Brenda Cole  
Lucas McDiarmid

**Also Present:** Christina Pike  
James Wawrzyk

1. **Call to Order:** 6:30 PM – Donald Blais, Jr. (Chair)
2. **Correspondence:**
  - a. Utility Notification- National Grid:

Replacement of one structure along the O15N line between West Ware Road and Town Farm Road within Riverfront and 100 ft buffer to Bordering Vegetated Wetland/Inland Bank.

The Agent stated that these activities are exempt by 310 CMR 10.02 (2)(a)(2) as a minor exemption for repairing or replacing utility poles.

- b. Final Forest Cutting Plans

The final forest cutting plans for 2 projects on Burlingame Road and a project spanning Springfield Street and New Hampshire Ave. The Agent stated that there were no new amendments, and the last amendments to these plans came through the office in 2022. The Agent added that the office received these plans on time.

- c. 2023 Railroad ROW Vegetation Management

The Agent stated that herbicides will be applied along the railways to control vegetation growth. This will begin July 31<sup>st</sup> and conclude on or before September 15<sup>th</sup>.

### 3. **Public Inquiries:**

Palmer Resident Christina Pike asked the Commission what is being done about the degrading curb by the Forest Lake beach which is allowing for stormwater to discharge into the lake. The Agent stated that she has informed the DPW of the issue but there is still a gray area as to whether it is the Town or State's responsibility.

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4. **Minutes:** 6/6/23

**Dorothy Lawrence made a motion to approve the minutes of 6/6/23 with amendments.**

**Motion seconded by Nick Zeo.**

**Motion carries 5-0-0.**

**No further discussion.**

5. **Approval Of Payables:**

- a. MACC- \$365.00: Dues

**Dorothy Lawrence made a motion to approve the payable to MACC in the amount of \$365.00 from the Conservation Expense Account.**

**Motion seconded by Dave Cotter.**

**Motion carries 5-0-0.**

**No further discussion.**

6. **Signing of Documents (DOA, OOC, COC, Ext, Etc.):**

- a. **Certificate of Compliance (COC) for DEP #256-0338- 1235 Thorndike St**

The Agent stated that she conducted 2 site visits to this facility, the first visit was on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. She reported that there was one area of concern where millings were entering the wetland. She continued that the applicant was present at this visit and promptly had the violation corrected and stabilized the area.

The Agent stated that her second site visit was conducted on July 17<sup>th</sup>, and she had noticed some changes to the site within this time, specifically mentioning that invasive Japanese Knotweed had begun to grow in around one of the stormwater inlets. She continued that the other pipe had some sediment accumulated in it. The Agent said that the Planning Department has a stormwater maintenance agreement with the applicant, which will ensure that they will take care of any issues that arise in perpetuity. She stated that the differences between the as-built and the approved plans are a change in the location and elevation of the gas line to ensure full coverage of the line, change in the location of catch basin slightly northerly on the edge of the pavement, and some boulders that were excavated during construction were used to outline the limit of work.

Chairman Blais commented on the length of the grass at the entrance to their parking area, he was concerned that it would be hazardous to drivers pulling out of the area. He continued that they have finally mowed it so he is satisfied on that matter. The Agent added that the grass growth is a good sign for the stabilization of the disturbed areas.

Dorothy Lawrence pointed out that the sediment accumulating in the outflow pipe is likely caused by the earth above the pipe sloughing down into it. She added that applying some hay would stabilize the slope and prevent that issue in the future. The Agent agreed and noted this to pass along to the applicant. Dorothy mentioned that it is good to allow the grass to grow a bit high so it can establish itself.

**Dorothy Lawrence made a motion to issue a complete Certificate of Compliance for DEP #256-0338 at 1235 Thorndike Street.**

**Motion seconded by Nick Zeo.**

**Motion carries 5-0-0.**

**No further discussion.**

## **7. New/Old Business:**

### **a. Minutes 72 Jim Ash Site Visit**

There were no questions from the Commission on these minutes.

### **b. Church St. Bridge Project Update**

The Agent stated that work on the Church Street bridge has begun, and that she completed the initial erosion control inspection, and everything looked great. She added that the Ware River Gas Main project will be beginning their work at this site around late September/early October.

Dorothy Lawrence added that the HDD drilling for the gas main likely will be quick and will probably occur before they pave the area.

### **c. LAND Grant Site Visit Update**

The Agent stated that the LAND grant for Lot 43 Barker Street has been submitted, and herself and Andrew the Recreation Director went on a site visit to the property on July 31<sup>st</sup>. She continued saying that the visit went very well, and they saw several groups of people taking advantage of the area including some kids jumping in the water and a man throwing his dog a ball in the river. The Agent added that the grant award will be announced around November.

### **d. Midura Trail Clean-up 8/14**

The Agent began by stating that the newly formed trail club will finally have their first work day. The Agent said that this work day will be at 10 am on August 14<sup>th</sup> and they will be taking a look at the trails and clearing them off in preparation for the event at Midura on August 26<sup>th</sup>. The Recreation Director has also been making some progress in planning to remove the Jeep from Midura, so he will be attending on that day as well to assess the logistics of the removal.

## **8. Violations & Enforcement:**

### **a. L65 Bennett Street**

The Agent invited James Wawrzyk up to the microphone to begin the discussion of the violation that occurred on his property. The Agent stated that the Commission had received complaints that someone working on the property had been habitually blowing grass clippings and other debris from the yard into Forest Lake. She stated that there was a history of violations on this property and she had consistently tried to contact the homeowner by mail but had not received a response until after a ticket for \$300 had been issued. Mr. Wawrzyk replied that he had only received these letters after the scheduled hearing dates listed in the letters.

The Agent said that she was disappointed that he did not call or email her to address the issue, even if the date had passed. Mr. Wawrzyk replied that he apologizes for the postal system. Vice Chair Dorothy Lawrence asked if it was not the correct address. Mr. Wawrzyk said it was the correct address, but he needed to sign for the certified letters, and one letter had arrived the week before the meeting so by the time he went down to the post office the date had passed.

The Agent asked for more clarity as to who was blowing the clippings into the lake and added that whoever was conducting the work had been told several times that this was not acceptable. Mr. Wawrzyk stated that he had been told that he is not allowed to put anything in the lake, and he removes clippings after cutting the grass and removes leaves after leaf blowing. He added that a few leaves may have accidentally ended up in the lake. He asked if it was one complaint about the clippings, to which the Agent replied that it was several complaints by an abutter. The Agent also stated that there are pictures of all the clippings that were deposited into the lake from this property.

The Agent added that adding a lot of organic material to the lake such as lawn clippings can cause eutrophication of the lake, or excess of nutrients, which is detrimental to the ecosystem. Commissioner Izyk added that this portion of Forest Lake is now overgrown with weeds, which eutrophication fuels. Commissioner Zeo stated that this is a filtration area to the Ware River, and can affect elements of the watershed downstream from this site.

Dorothy ended by stating that he should be actively avoiding affecting the lake in the future and asked if Mr. Wawrzyk had paid the fine. The Agent stated that he had not, there was a period when he could either pay or appeal, and since that period had passed the Commission has the option of pursuing a criminal complaint. The Agent said that she did not see that this would be necessary for this scenario. The Agent ended by stating that the next time he receives any notice of violation, he reaches out as soon as possible to the Commission.

## **9. Chair, Member, Committee & Agent Reports**

Dave Cotter asked the Agent if she had contacted Sherwood Lumber about what they are building on their property by the Swift River trails. She stated that she had not spoken with anyone yet, and Dave continued saying that they are now laying foundation within the trench. Dave also added that they were supposed to build a boardwalk over their water pumping station, which they had yet to follow through with.

Dave Cotter asked the Agent what kind of tools will be needed for the workday on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The Agent replied saying they will need rakes, loppers, saws, and that so far she has received confirmation from about 3 or 4 volunteers so he could likely bring enough for 10 volunteers. The Agent added that she will head down to Midura before the workday to assess exact needs.

Dave Cotter mentioned that it may be a good opportunity to put new posts in for the walkway if the conditions are dry enough. Nick Zeo asked what the parking situation will be like, to which the Agent responded that the meadows will be mowed in the coming days, and will hopefully be taken care of before the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Dave Cotter asked if the Agent could stop by the work happening on Route 20, mentioning that the workers are likely contracted and may not know the regulations. He added that there were issues in the past where Angela had seen people working in the river on other ROW projects. The Agent agreed that this was a great idea and she will be stopping by to ensure everything is being conducted within regulation.

## **10. Set Next Meeting Date: 8/15/2023**

### **11. Adjourn:**

**Motion made by Nick Zeo to adjourn at 7:08 PM.**

**Motion seconded by Dorothy Lawrence.**

**Motion carries 5-0-0.**

**No further discussion.**

Sincerely Submitted,

Heidi Mannarino  
Conservation Agent

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023